

Assembly Bill No. 372

CHAPTER 230

An act to amend Section 2941 of the Civil Code, relating to mortgages.

[Approved by Governor July 20, 1996. Filed with
Secretary of State July 22, 1996.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 372, Cortese. Mortgages.

Existing law requires a beneficiary or assignee of the beneficiary of an obligation secured by any deed of trust to execute and deliver to the trustee specified documents, including the original note, deed of trust, and request for a full reconveyance, when the obligation has been satisfied. Existing law conclusively presumes, until January 1, 1988, that a fee charged by a trustee, beneficiary, or mortgagee for all services involved in the preparation, execution, and recordation of the full reconveyance to be reasonable if it does not exceed \$65.

This bill would delete the inoperative date of the presumption.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 2941 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

2941. (a) Within 30 days after any mortgage has been satisfied, the mortgagee or the assignee of the mortgagee shall execute a certificate of the discharge thereof, as provided in Section 2939, and shall record or cause to be recorded, except as provided in subdivision (c), in the office of the county recorder in which the mortgage is recorded. The mortgagee shall then deliver, upon the written request of the mortgagor or the mortgagor's heirs, successors, or assignees, as the case may be, the original note and mortgage to the person making the request.

(b) (1) When the obligation secured by any deed of trust has been satisfied, the beneficiary or the assignee of the beneficiary shall execute and deliver to the trustee the original note, deed of trust, request for a full reconveyance, and other documents as may be necessary to reconvey, or cause to be reconveyed, the deed of trust.

(A) The trustee shall execute the full reconveyance and shall record or cause it to be recorded, except as provided in subdivision (c), in the office of the county recorder in which the deed of trust is recorded within 21 calendar days after receipt by the trustee of the original note, deed of trust, request for a full reconveyance, the fee that may be charged pursuant to subdivision (e), recorder's fees, and

other documents as may be necessary to reconvey, or cause to be reconveyed, the deed of trust.

(B) The trustee shall deliver a copy of the reconveyance to the beneficiary, its successor in interest, or its servicing agent, if known.

(C) Following execution and recordation of the full reconveyance, upon receipt of a written request by the trustor or the trustor's heirs, successors, or assignees, the trustee shall then deliver the original note and deed of trust to the person making that request.

(2) If the trustee has failed to execute and record, or cause to be recorded, the full reconveyance within 60 calendar days of satisfaction of the obligation, the beneficiary, upon receipt of a written request by the trustor or trustor's heirs, successor in interest, agent, or assignee, shall execute and acknowledge a document pursuant to Section 2934a substituting itself or another as trustee and issue a full reconveyance.

(3) If a full reconveyance has not been executed and recorded pursuant to either paragraph (1) or paragraph (2) within 75 calendar days of satisfaction of the obligation, then a title insurance company may prepare and record a release of the obligation. However, at least 10 days prior to the issuance and recording of a full release pursuant to this paragraph, the title insurance company shall mail by first-class mail with postage prepaid, the intention to release the obligation to the trustee, trustor, and beneficiary of record, or their successor in interest of record, at the last known address.

(A) The release shall set forth:

(i) The name of the beneficiary.

(ii) The name of the trustor.

(iii) The recording reference to the deed of trust.

(iv) A recital that the obligation secured by the deed of trust has been paid in full.

(v) The date and amount of payment.

(B) The release issued pursuant to this subdivision shall be entitled to recordation and, when recorded, shall be deemed to be the equivalent of a reconveyance of a deed of trust.

(4) Where an obligation secured by a deed of trust was paid in full prior to July 1, 1989, and no reconveyance has been issued and recorded by October 1, 1989, then a release of obligation as provided for in paragraph (3) may be issued.

(5) Paragraphs (2) and (3) do not excuse the beneficiary or the trustee from compliance with paragraph (1). Paragraph (3) does not excuse the beneficiary from compliance with paragraph (2).

(6) In addition to any other remedy provided by law, a title insurance company preparing or recording the release of the obligation shall be liable to any party for damages, including attorneys' fees, which any person may sustain by reason of the issuance and recording of the release, pursuant to paragraphs (3) and (4).

(c) The mortgagee or trustee shall not record or cause the certificate of discharge or full reconveyance to be recorded when any of the following circumstances exists:

(1) The mortgagee or trustee has received written instructions to the contrary from the mortgagor or trustor, or the owner of the land, as the case may be, or from the owner of the obligation secured by the deed of trust or his or her agent, or escrow.

(2) The certificate of discharge or full reconveyance is to be delivered to the mortgagor or trustor, or the owner of the land, as the case may be, through an escrow to which the mortgagor, trustor, or owner is a party.

(3) When the personal delivery is not for the purpose of causing recordation and when the certificate of discharge or full reconveyance is to be personally delivered with receipt acknowledged by the mortgagor or trustor or owner of the land, as the case may be, or their agent if authorized by mortgagor or trustor or owner of the land.

(d) The violation of this section shall make the violator liable to the person affected by the violation for all damages which that person may sustain by reason of the violation, and shall require that the violator forfeit to that person the sum of three hundred dollars (\$300).

(e) (1) The trustee, beneficiary, or mortgagee may charge a reasonable fee to the trustor or mortgagor, or the owner of the land, as the case may be, for all services involved in the preparation, execution, and recordation of the full reconveyance, including, but not limited to, document preparation and forwarding services rendered to effect the full reconveyance, and, in addition, may collect official fees. This fee may be made payable no earlier than the opening of a bona fide escrow or no more than 60 days prior to the full satisfaction of the obligation secured by the deed of trust or mortgage.

(2) If the fee charged pursuant to this subdivision does not exceed sixty-five dollars (\$65), the fee is conclusively presumed to be reasonable.

(f) For purposes of this section, “original” may include an optically imaged reproduction when the following requirements are met:

(1) The trustee receiving the request for reconveyance and executing the reconveyance as provided in subdivision (b) is an affiliate or subsidiary of the beneficiary or an affiliate or subsidiary of the assignee of the beneficiary, respectively.

(2) The optical image storage media used to store the document shall be nonerasable write once, read many (WORM) optical image media that does not allow changes to the stored document.

(3) The optical image reproduction shall be made consistent with the minimum standards of quality approved by either the National

Institute of Standards and Technology or the Association for Information and Image Management.

(4) Written authentication identifying the optical image reproduction as an unaltered copy of the note, deed of trust, or mortgage shall be stamped or printed on the optical image reproduction.

